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ABSTRACT

The Secondary/Postsecondary Transition Project for Learning Disabled Youth at the University of Minnesota-General College is a federally funded 3-year project designed to help learning disabled juniors and seniors in the Minneapolis Public Schools explore postsecondary educational and vocational options. The intervention consists of two parts: the cooperation of local service providers and the assistance of transition counselors who provide such services as counseling, advising, assessment, advocacy, remediation, and consultation to learning disabled students and their families as well as to school personnel. A documentation format, the Transition Plan, has been developed to be coordinated with the secondary Individual Education Plan. The plan is first put into effect during the student's junior year of high school. The plan includes the following components: past services received (level of service, diagnostic testing, amount of mainstreaming); current services received (accommodations needed, individual strengths and weaknesses); vocational goals (desired occupation, vocational testing, job experience); postsecondary goals (institution selected, needed accommodations); and specific objectives to be completed (materials/techniques to be utilized, completion dates, and persons responsible). Major strengths of the Sample Transition Plan include the use of critical information from the student's past files that directly influence postsecondary decisions. The four-page sample plan is appended. (DB)

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Using Appropriate Documentation within the Secondary/Postsecondary Transition Process with Learning Disabled Adolescents and Adults

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Using Appropriate Documentation within the Secondary/Postsecondary Transition Process with Learning Disabled Adolescents and Adults

Perhaps one of the most urgent needs in the field of learning disabilities today is that of appropriate service delivery and well-researched materials to assist learning disabled adolescents and their families in the transition from secondary to postsecondary settings (Gray, 1981; Price & Johnson, 1986).

There are a number of pressing areas of concern for providers of transition services for LD adolescents and adults. One of the most critical is the dearth of research in this area. The professional literature has not conclusively discussed either theoretical service delivery models or defined key concepts that need attention in terms of critical issues to be addressed in the transition process (Adleman & Taylor, 1985; Mick, 1985; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1983).

Another distinct area to be addressed is what types of specific materials or techniques seem to be most successful when dealing with this population and its unique transition needs.

For example, is specialized vocational counseling necessary? Are certain kinds of assessment more helpful than others to provide transition information to LD students and their families? Should specific staff be responsible for assisting these students and their families to make the critical decisions inherent in the transition process from secondary to postsecondary settings? If so, how and when should the staff be trained in transition issues? Can certain issues or deadlines be designated within the transition process that seem to be critical to a successful transition for LD individuals? Can these issues be

generalized into a clear timeline for most LD students? If certain techniques or materials seem to predict a successful transition process, are these materials and techniques cost-effective? Are they efficient in terms of staff time allotted? Are these techniques and materials similar or different if the LD student has vocationally-oriented goals instead of academically-oriented goals after high school graduation?

All these questions, and many others, are currently facing LD Specialists and other professionals in both secondary and postsecondary settings as they work with LD adolescents and adults on a daily basis. Since it is becoming clear that a learning disability is a developmental problem that does not go away when the LD child grows into a teenager and then into an adult (Buchanan & Wolf, 1986), these pragmatic and relevant questions beg to be examined in greater depth.

These questions are the impetus for the funding of a 3 year federal grant at the University of Minnesota-General College. The Secondary/Postsecondary Transition Project for Learning Disabled Youth was originally written to explore in a systematic way many of these important facets of the transition process with a large group of LD juniors and seniors in the Minneapolis Public Schools. These high school students chosen from the seven Minneapolis public high schools will participate in an intervention which will assist them to explore the post-sec ndary educational and vocational options that are available in the Twin Cities area and help them to look more closely at their individual strengths, weaknesses, needs for accomodations and personal goals as they mature towards adulthood.

The intervention consists of two major parts. The first part involves the cooperation of targeted local service providers: eLDA Reading and Math Clinic

(a local privately-funded agency for LD adults), Minneapolis Community College (a public 2-year community college), Minneapolis Technical Institute (a local area vocational-technical institute), and the University of Minnesota (a major undergraduate and graduate institution). The second part of the intervention involves the assistance of on-site transition counselors who provide a wide range of services including counseling, advising, assessment, advocacy, remediation, and consultation to learning disabled students and their families, as well as to secondary and postsecondary school personnel.

The transition counselors are responsible for examining current services the student receives, helping the student to develop appropriate vocational, academic, and social goals for the postsecondary setting and recommending future services that will be needed to achieve those goals. A tool that was identified as essential to this process was some form of written documentation that picked up where the secondary Individual Education Plan (IEP) left off.

The Sample Transition Plan which follows was developed by the Project staff to address this critical need. It was hoped that by utilization of such a format, LD individuals could still receive services that they so urgently needed beyond high school in a more consistent, proactive manner.

The Sample Transition Plan is developed by the transition counselors in conjunction with the students, parents, and school personnel. The plan is first operationalized in the students junior year of high school and is utilized in the planning for transition to postsecondary settings. The plan includes the following components:

Past Services - information on level of service, diagnostic testing, courses/subjects and what accomodations were used, and percentages of mainstreaming and resource room time.

Current Services - information on those accomodations needed and where they are used as well as individual student strengths and weaknesses.

Vocational Goals - information on desired major or occupation, vocational counseling or other techniques needed, vocational testing, previous job experience, and previous vocational services.

Post-Secondary Goals - information on what institution has been selected, the accomodations that will be necessary, projected entry date and major, and the need for follow-up.

Specific Objectives to be Completed - information on secondary and postsecondary objectives, materials/techniques to be utilized, completion dates, and persons responsible.

The Sample Transition Plan serves several objectives. These objectives are: (a) to gather data from a larger group of LD adolescents in a consistent, systematic way to see if any trends emerge in the transition process; (b) to summarize for individual LD students (and their families) exactly what comprises the unique strengths, weaknesses, and individual goals that the student exhibited in the high school setting; (c) to communicate in a formalized replicable manner what services that student will need given the total profile presented by the student in the postsecondary setting; (d) to pick up where the secondary IEP leaves off; and (e) to provide vital programmatic information to postsecondary institutions.

Since these are objectives and concerns that are shared by many LD specialists and professionals, it is felt that this Sample Transition Plan would be of interest to or could be adapted by other individuals/programs that are concerned with bridging the gap between secondary and postsecondary programming for learning disabled students. While some might choose to use this plan or its

concept with modifications in entirety, others might select those parts which best fit their needs. For example, portions of the plan can serve as guides to student and/or family interviews, academic and/or vocational planning, or definition and implementation of goals and objectives.

The authors feel that one major advantage to the effective utilization of the Sample Transition Plan (as seen in Appendix A) is to find and/or update critical information from the LD student's past files that will directly influence postsecondary decisions about appropriate classes, major and accommodations. If this information is not given to the postsecondary counselor in an accurate, concise manner, often the LD student can waste precious time and money taking classes or failing to meet college program requirements. This lack of communication can jeopardize the student just when she or he needs to start college with a successful experience. In summary, even if the reader chooses not to use the Sample Transition Plan as seen in this paper, it can serve as a list of suggested information that should definitely be discussed and gathered before the LD student graduates from high school. The information in the Plan can then be a helpful foundation for making critical decisions about postsecondary options.

Note to the Reader:

In this first series of papers on transition issues, the staff of the Secondary/Postsecondary Transition Project for Learning Disabled Youth have presented a Sample Transition Plan. It is anticipated that the plan will help to provide a means for consistent documentation and compilation of information that will begin to address the questions and concerns raised in the introduction of this paper. At the very least it is expected that the plan will act as an impetus for increased awareness about transition issues.

The series of papers concerning counseling issues and postsecondary students with learning disabilities is written specifically for those professionals who are service providers, guidance counselors, LD specialists, advisors, etc. in various postsecondary settings. However, the authors feel strongly that the information discussed in these papers may be applicable wherever support staff work with LD adolescents or adults and their families.

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Appendix A

SAMPLE TRANSITION PLAN

GENERAL INFORMATION

Date_____

Student name_____

Address_____

_____

Phone_____

Project Case Manager_____

High School_____

High School Teacher or Counselor_____

Age_____ Sex___ Junior ___ Senior ____

****

PAST SERVICES FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

Level of service_____ A copy of the current IEP enclosed Y/N___

Diagnostic Testing :

School/agency: _____

_____

Date: _____

Tests used: _____

_____

Specific accommodations used:_____

_____

List specific courses or subjects where accommodations were used:

_____

Was the LD student in a Resource Room Y/N ___ % of time_____

Was the LD student in a mainstreamed setting Y/N ___ % of time_____

****

CURRENT L D SERVICES NEEDED

ACADEMICS

Specific Accommodations needed: _____

_____

High School Courses where Accommodations are used: _____

_____

Individual Student Strengths: _____

_____

_____

Individual Student Weaknesses: _____

_____

_____

Student Transition Plan
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VOCATIONAL SERVICES

DVR Counselor _____

VOCATIONAL GOALS _____

Desired Major or Occupation: _____

_____

Vocational Counseling or Techiques Needed: _____

_____

Recommended Vocational Testing: _____

_____

Previous Job Experience: _____

_____

Previous Vocational Services: _____

_____

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POSTSECONDARY GOALS _____

_____

Postsecondary Institution _____

Specific Accommodations _____

Projected Entry Date _____ Projected Major _____

Follow-up Needed: _____

_____

_____

Student Transition Plan
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SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES TO BE COMPLETED

*Code objectives either Secondary=S or Postsecondary=P.

Objective*	Materials/Techniques	Date Completed	Person Responsible
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

_____ _____

(Student signature/date) (parent/guardian)

_____ _____

(Project staff signature/date) (Optional: DVR Counselor)